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RR RUEHAG RUEHDF RUEHLZ  
DE RUEHRL #1483/01 3270713  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 230713Z NOV 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5853  
INFO RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
RUCNFRG/FRG COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 1751  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0468  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0987  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 2494  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1510  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 BERLIN 001483

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/PAPD, EUR/PPA, EUR/CE, INR/EUC, INR/P,  
SECDEF FOR USDP/ISA/DSAA, DIA FOR DC-4A

VIENNA FOR CSBM, CSCE, PAA

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFGHANISTAN, MIDDLE EAST, IRAN, DPRK,  
U.S.-

ASIA, EU, ENVIRONMENT;BERLIN

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#### [1](#)1. Lead Stories Summary

Print media opened with reports on the special EU summit in Brussels and the inauguration of Afghanistan's President Karzai. Editorials focused on the same issues. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast Heute opened with a report on President Karzai taking his oath of office, while ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a story on the beginning of the talks of EU leaders in Brussels

#### [1](#)2. (Afghanistan) President Karzai's Inauguration

All papers (11/20) carried lengthy reports on President Karzai's inauguration emphasizing that the president promised to fight corruption and drug trafficking. Die Welt headlined; "Afghanistan's

President Promises to Fight Corruption," Sueddeutsche carried a front-page report under the headline: "Karzai Promises the West Improvement." Frankfurter Allgemeine opened with a report on its front page, headlined: "Karzai: In Five Years We Are Better Off."

Many Papers also carried editorials on Karzai's promises.

Deutschlandfunk (11/19) broadcast the following commentary: "The fact that Foreign Minister Westerwelle traveled to Kabul to attend the inauguration of Afghan President Karzai signals his support for a politician who has been kept in office because of electoral fraud.

But NATO set out to bring democracy to Afghanistan. TQay's presence of a few ministers with Secretary Hillary Clinton at the helm is sending the wrong signals. The western states did not want to bring

this form of democracy to Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Karzai is needed in order to implement at least a few steps towards a positive development in Afghanistan. He must be taken at his word, and he must now do what he said and what he is being told. But the political and military opposition will now present him as a puppet of the western world. He will thus lose the remaining support he still enjoys in the country. That is why the world must now pin its hopes on the regional representatives and do so much more than in the past."

Regional radio station Westdeutscher Rundfunk of Cologne (11/19) commented: "The international community and Afghan President Karzai are joined together like Siamese twins. Either they will have joint  
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successes, or they will fail together. The only chance for both sides to succeed is that they clearly know that this is our last chance. In his inaugural speech, Karzai addressed the main things even though in vague terms. It looked as if Clinton, Westerwelle, and Miliband proofread the speech and were thus its authors. Taliban, corruption, women's rights, everything was included. But Karzai will be measured against his deeds. He must now quickly prove to the Afghans that he is serious about them."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (11/20) said in a front-page editorial headlined "Oath of Disclosure" that "In view of the discrepancy between the high stakes and the disappointing result, the international community is losing patience with President Karzai and his government. Never before has a president, after his election, received so many rebukes from his allies in his congratulatory mail.

The governments in Washington, London, and Berlin know this and, nevertheless, they are discussing exit strategies. The powers that be on either side of the Atlantic are aware that the previous policy is

no option; each of them wants to get out of Afghanistan because their peoples want them to get out. By reinforcing their troops, the Americans and British think they can decide and end their campaign with one final great battle.... But Afghanistan's stability is closely linked to that of Pakistan. And this is the main reason why the West cannot be indifferent to Afghanistan's fate in the future, even though there is nothing the West would rather be."

According to Die Welt (11/20), "the statements of many western politicians demonstrate how disillusioned the NATO partners have become about a politician who was once their man in Kabul and is now

considered a problem. That is why Karzai at least tried in his inaugural speech to make concessions to the West. Following its experience with Karzai over the past few years, the West is well advised to remind him of these promises.... But the most important

thing is that the West gets out of this stage of a lack of orientation. A mission that has no goal and no direction is doomed to failure."

Sueddeutsche Zeitung (11/20) opined: "Karzai's speech does not mean a thing. The downtrodden country will not move ahead with words. The president has been at the helm in Afghanistan for more than eight years now. This is one truth. The other one is: The West, too, made mistakes because it pinned its hopes only on Karzai. But power in Afghanistan rests not primarily with the president but with the tribes in the regions. An understanding, including with the Taliban, will be

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possible only if regional approaches are strengthened and if the president reduces his claim for power. Karzai's plan to organize a Lorja Jirga, which he can moderate, is the right approach."

In the view of Handelsblatt (11/20), "the West developed a carrot-and-stick policy for President Karzai. The carrot is the warm words and a continuing flow of money. The stick is the threat of a troop withdrawal and the open attempt to bypass Karzai and to directly influence the provincial leaders. This looks familiar to us, because such methods were also frequently used in the past, the last time in Iraq."

Berliner Zeitung (11/20) opined: "The Afghanistan that the West would like to get and will probably get some day in the future will be an undemocratic Afghanistan. It will be a country in which corruption remains essential for the fabric of society; it will be a country in which women have no rights, and in which gangs rule. But it will be a country in which security forces are so strong that they will be able to prevent the development of new terrorist training camps, thus reducing the danger of attacks in the U.S. and Europe. This is what it is all about eight years after the beginning of the adventure in Afghanistan. It is not democracy, not the rule of law; it is only security, our security."

### 13. (Middle East) Israeli Settlement Policy

Under the sub-headline: "Barack Obama's Middle East Diplomacy is About to Fail," Tagesspiegel (11/20) editorialized: "Measured against the things that are obvious in the Middle East, Barack Obama's Middle East policy is surprisingly dilettantish, even though his [Mideast policy] began very favorably with George Mitchell's appointment, with his speech in Cairo where Obama presented himself as an honest broker and with his move to wrestle the two-state concession from Benjamin

Netanyahu. But afterwards he lost his political instinct. Indeed, Barack Obama is now faced with a pile of debris that is even bigger than it was at the beginning of his term. In Israel, his reputation is at an all-time low and in the Arab world his popularity has suffered. But this is not all. The fuse is burning at the second trouble spot in the region: Iran, which has now rejected the western offer in the nuclear conflict. Has Obama a Plan B with respect to his relations with the Mullahs? Only two weeks ago, a giant arms shipment to the Hezbollah militia force in Lebanon was exposed. And even this

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did not prompt Washington to change course. There are mounting indications that Obama's policy of an extended hand is faced with a debacle."

#### 14. (Iran) Nuclear Conflict

Handelsblatt (11/20) headlined: "U.S. is getting impatient with Iran," and added in its intro: "In the nuclear dispute, Iran must prepare itself for new sanctions. After Tehran's rejection of the compromise deal, Barack Obama noted that he is losing his patience." Under the

headline "Back in the old trenches," Frankfurter Rundschau (11/20) analyzed: "The cat has now been let out of the bag. The uranium compromise between the Vienna authority and the Islamic Republic has

fallen through. The intermezzo of diplomatic rapprochement is over.... The deal would have been good for both sides. Iran would have gotten civilian nuclear technology and the world community the assurance that Teheran does not produce a nuclear bomb in the predictable future as it would lack fissile material. The nuclear dispute would have been resolved - at least for the time being. This is off. Following a tough dispute among Tehran's conservatives, Ayatollah Khamenei obviously ended the dispute with his unusually harsh attack on the U.S. on the 30th anniversary of the seizure of the American embassy.

All sides involved are now back in their old trenches. The Iranian regime is again enjoying itself in the position of a lonesome fighter against everybody, while the West is getting ready for a new round of sanctions."

#### 15. (DPRK) Obama Warning

Under the headline "Nice Words," Frankfurter Allgemeine (11/20) commented: "Barack Obama concealed his warning with a lot of sweetness, sending his special envoy Bosworth to Pyongyang. He will

apparently get the message there that Washington is no longer prepared to accept North Korea's tactics of the recent years. The problem is that Bosworth's visit to Pyongyang is the result of these North Korean tactics. They were reportedly enraged and left the negotiating table at the six party talks. They now make their gracious return dependent on the talks with the Americans. If Obama were consistent, he would

send his envoy to China.... Bosworth could suggest that there would be something valuable for North Korea at a table in China. Some kind of a dtente could be the result. Let's not believe in a denuclearization of North Korea. What would Pyongyang have left if it gave away its greatest asset?"

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#### 16. (U.S.-Asia) Obama Trip

Norddeutscher Rundfunk radio of Hamburg (11/19) commented: "Barack Obama bowed deeply - too deep to Japan's emperor. Obama's bow to the Tenno in Tokyo is the picture that will remain from his mammoth tour to Japan, China, Singapore, and South Korea: Obama degrading himself and very small, almost a caricature of himself. This is a snapshot that summarizes Obama's eight days in Asia and that depicts a president who, in the strongholds of Asian politeness, wanted to do everything right and use the right forms and who, for this reason, did not succeed in doing something right, but only played the tunes of his hosts. It was a weak performance in Asia, measured against the performances of his predecessors. China as an economic power has become more self-confident, tougher and even more uncompromising. It knows that Obama needs the bundles of dollars from Chinese safes to finance its record debt policy with money that is used to finance rescue and bailout programs for everyone. That is why Obama's latitude in Beijing was restricted right from the start. Obama is right to be really annoyed at China because it manipulates its currency in order to make Chinese goods even cheaper than they are and to stymie any competition. But this currency scandal should at least have shown up in one phrase in the minutes, which it did not. It is no coincidence that Obama's so-called news conferences were de facto nothing but empty communiqués.... Obama, who likes to speak so brilliantly, simply had nothing to say. And this speaks volumes about the trip of a deeply bowed president to Asia."

#### 17. (EU) EU Top Jobs

ARD-TV's Tagesthemen (11/19) opined: "The result of the negotiations had a price: two people were nominated for the future EU top jobs, who have had no opportunity in the past to develop their profiles.... They might become good people, but nobody yet knows them... There seems to be a clear will within Europe not to appoint too powerful people to these positions. European leaders don't want to be upstaged by 'those in Brussels.' Berlin, Paris, London and other national capitals want to continue to play a strong role. The appointments of the two EU top jobs seem to guarantee this.... There were more distinguished leaders."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (11/20) wrote in a front-page editorial: "This

team of a conservative from a traditionally pro-European member states

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and a Social Democrat from a traditionally skeptical member is clearly an old-school compromise, so the evening did not go on forever as feared. Only the Eastern Europeans went home with empty hands.... Is this now the EU that was strengthened by the Lisbon Treaty and that

will now give Europe more weight during international summits? Both politicians have achieved honorable things: Prime Minister van Rompuy's great achievement is to have led the Belgian government into still waters. The way Catherine Ashton's pushed the Lisbon Treaty through the cliffs of the Upper House was also no small achievement.

However, can these two faces personify the new beginning government leaders promised when they defended the EU reform against all the criticism and lethargy in nation states? The words 'European constitution' were too big for the text of the Lisbon Treaty. The words 'European president' also seem to be too big."

Berliner Zeitung's (11/20) editorial remarked under the headlined "Two nobodies for Europe" that the decision is "disappointing," adding: "The community has picked leaders without personality, without visions, and partly at least without experience. Future Council President van Rompuy is an honorable Belgian man who skillfully kept

his country together. He is not a heavyweight in Europe and the world. The heads of states and governments looked for an administrator. The appointment of Catherine Ashton is even more disappointing. The future chief diplomat has never before dealt with classic foreign diplomacy. The facts that she is a Social Democrat,

comes from Britain and is a woman were sufficient for her nomination. It did not play a role whether she is well plugged-in and knows the right people in government. The EU wants to be strong at home and abroad. Looking at van Rompuy and Mrs. Ashton suggests that this will not be the case."

Tagesspiegel (11/20) bemoaned in a front-page editorial: "Luxemburg

Prime Minister Juncker would have been the perfect choice for the post of the EU Council president. He is a powerful expert of the European mechanisms, who, above all, also represents a small country. The EU has gambled away the opportunity the Lisbon Treaty had offered. It would have been the time to appoint men and women to the posts of the EU with its 500 million people whose word would be heard throughout the world and who could create new confidence between the Europeans and the institutions in Brussels."

Under the headline "Two Under Secretaries for Europe," FT Deutschland (11/20) editorialized on the front page: "Herman who? Catherine who?"

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Most Europeans have never heard the names of the EU council

president  
and the high representative before. Chancellor Merkel, President Sarkozy and their European colleagues could have picked more charismatic people for the new top jobs, which were created by the Lisbon Treaty. They deliberately decided against it. They were looking for under secretaries who can act in the background and are not international showoffs. Belgian Prime Minister van Rompuy and EU Trade Commissioner Ashton met these job descriptions. The choice of unknown candidates shows that the powerful government leaders do not want to be outshone by European officials. During EU and G20 summits, Merkel and Co. don't want to share the limelight with the EU Council president and the high representative.... However, the decision might not necessarily be bad. The fact that the 27 EU leaders reached an agreement within hours is a good signal. After the weeks of disputes, many had expected a night-long struggle without any results. The Flemish leader van Rompuy has shown an impressive talent to meditate compromises. This talent will be helpful in the efforts to moderate the disputes of the state and government leaders. Ashton's nomination also has indisputable advantages: as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Britain is one of Europe's heavyweights. Hardly any other country can contribute to increase Europe's might and credibility in international diplomacy."

#### 18. (Environment) Copenhagen Conference

In the view of Frankfurter Allgemeine (11/20) "the chancellor feels her own commitment that, if there is anybody, who is able and willing to achieve a success in Copenhagen, then it is herself. It should not be decisive whether Barack Obama takes the trouble to travel to Copenhagen or whether China is willing to make any kind of concessions. The Europeans and some other nations will follow her because her arguments are more farsighted than the ones of her opponents. And, as long as she is convinced that her arguments are true, she will stick to her goals - for the benefit of future generations."

MURPHY